

Mr. Speaker, I rise to voice my strong opposition to H.R. 2608, the short-term continuing appropriations measure on the floor today to fund government operations through November 18, 2011.

Hundreds of American communities have been devastated this year by hurricanes, droughts, floods, wildfires and tornadoes. Dozens of Governors – both Republicans and Democrats – have requested federal assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to meet the needs of their states' residents. These federal funds are used by state and local response teams to house displaced families, provide crisis counseling to disaster victims, remove debris, and repair or replace critical bridges, roads and utilities.

With more than three months remaining, 2011 has already seen more billion dollar disasters than any year on record. Early cost estimates of this year's weather-related disasters are well above \$20 billion. As a result, FEMA can no longer afford to help all those who need assistance. The Associated Press reported that FEMA's disaster funding is now so low that planned repairs to bridges, roads and schools in tornado-ravaged Joplin, Missouri have been stopped and the funds redirected to help the victims of Hurricane Irene.

Caring for Americans devastated by natural disasters has always been a basic American value. Unfortunately, House Republicans are turning disaster relief into a partisan political battle by under-funding these urgent needs and demanding that emergency funds be offset with cuts to a critical job-creating initiative.

The House legislation under debate today includes \$3.65 billion in emergency aid – \$1.8 billion less what the Obama Administration told Congress is needed. Even worse, H.R. 2608 cuts \$1 billion from the Advanced Technology Vehicle Manufacturing Program (ATVM). This public-private partnership helps U.S. auto makers and parts suppliers build next generation vehicles with technologies made in America, rather than imported from China and other foreign countries. The ATVM is a major success. It has already saved or created 41,000 American jobs and will save or create at least 35,000 additional jobs anticipated by the end of this year. The cuts demanded by House Republicans to this program threaten to destroy thousands of American jobs and undermine the global competitiveness of U.S. auto makers.

During the past decade, House Republicans voted time and time again for so-called emergency

funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan without offsetting the costs. The hundreds of billions of dollars in deficit spending Republicans supported on these wars helped create the crippling debt our country now faces. And now, my House Republican colleagues are pretending to take a stand against deficits by threatening to shutdown the U.S. government and deny assistance to American families who have had their lives destroyed by natural disaster.

I call on reasonable Republicans in the House to join with Democrats to reject this hypocritical and callous bill, and instead commit the necessary funding to rescue America's devastated communities.